6-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

A, wongh. OESN'T 5Habits FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH Nicki Kozianz.



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Introduction

IS THERE SOMETHING YOU ARE READY TO QUIT? IS THERE SOMEONE YOU WANT TO GIVE UP ON?

Perseverance is one of the greatest skills but one of the hardest lessons we will learn in our lifetime. We are living in a day when we are encouraged to do life based on how we feel.

I want to eat what I want to eat, but stay healthy.

I want to follow God, but only if it feels good.

I want to serve others, but, if I don't feel like it, I tell myself there's always another day.

Every now and then I'll get an ounce of determination and start to pursue the dreams, the talents, and the gifts God has given me with all my might, but it seems like once I get going, something is always trying to stop me.

I often quit before I even realize I've quit.

Maybe you can relate.

You bombed the interview and didn't get the job you wanted, so you gave up trying and settled for the other position.

The first run you went on left you on the side of the road throwing up, so you never ran again. A business you started failed, so you threw in the towel of entrepreneurship.

Marriage got messy, complicated, and hard, so you stopped trying.

I'm not proud to own this title, but I truly am the quitting expert. All those things above *and more* have been part of my quitting journey.

But then I discovered this woman in the Bible, Ruth, and she taught me so much more than a Bible story. Through her life I uncovered five life-giving habits to help me persevere when things get hard, complicated, and messy.

These habits do more than just motivate me—they help me to fight resistance when it rises. They've taught me to pursue discipline instead of desire as I determine my daily direction.

I've learned the direction of our lives needs to be far less about to-do lists and accomplishments but more about becoming people God can count on.

And when we become someone God can count on, incredible things start to happen. Lives are transformed, generational lines of bondage are broken, and we become the best possible version of ourselves.

The Enemy of our souls, Satan, knows what pushes us to our limits. He wants us to give up on the hopes, dreams, and plans God has for us. He wants you to quit because then there is one less threat to him.

There is power when women come together and call Satan out on his arrows of defeat.

We will not be women who back down from the promises of God. We will not let fear keep us from pushing through. And when that day comes and we stand before our God, He will say,"Well done, my good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21, NLT).

Yes, friend, we can and will do hard things (together).

HOW THIS WILL WORK

I know your life's complicated, busy, and challenging. The last thing I want you to do is quit your Bible study! I'm keeping things as simple as possible for you to be successful through this study.

Each week you'll come together with hopefully at least one other person to discuss, challenge each other, and study the Book of Ruth together. You have the option to watch a short video teaching each week as well! The person/group I'm studying this with is _____.
 We are going to meet on

Or maybe you are going to do this study solo, and that's OK too! God is ready to meet you and give you a powerful encounter with Him through His Word.

Each day there are helpful questions for you to discuss with someone else or reflect on personally. The in-depth Bible teachings will help you unpack Ruth's story.

The most important part of your weekly study will be your Q.U.I.T. strategy time. This is the place where you let God speak to you through His Word but also where you are open and honest about the daily struggles you face.

It will also help you evaluate what things need to shift in your life so that you can successfully apply the five habits from the Book of Ruth to every place you want to quit before it's too late!

And guess what else?

By the time you complete this study, you will have read the entire Book of Ruth and studied more than twenty-five Bible verses to help you persevere! That's a pretty awesome accomplishment.

Share what you're learning on social media with *#5HabitsStudy*!

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW THIS STUDY WILL WORK:

QUIT QUITTING VERSE OF THE DAY

These are the verses you will want to keep close by for those times you need to experience the power of God through His written Word. Each day you'll have the chance to study and learn how to apply them to your life.

SHORT READINGS

I'll be sharing a lot of my personal journey and we'll connect with Ruth on a deeper level through these sections. I haven't held anything back from you—the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of my journey are written into this study. You'll also read a portion of Ruth's story each week and look up other verses that relate to what we are studying.

My goal is to get you as familiar with the Book of Ruth as possible but also introduce you to other parts of Scripture as it relates to not giving up.

OUR Q.U.I.T. STRATEGY

This might be my favorite part! To overcome any battle, there has to be a strategy. This is ours! At the end of the week you'll have the opportunity to work through this strategy. Here's what the Q.U.I.T. strategy entails:

Q: QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK AND ANSWER.

It's so important on this journey to allow ourselves to wrestle with questions about the text we are studying, but also to personally evaluate the progress we are making. God's Word brings life and lifechange, but it does require effort on our part. These questions will help bring you to this place of life-change.

U: UNDERSTANDING THE WORD

Here we will recap what verses, words, or characters you studied during the week. We'll make sure you have a clear picture of what has happened in Ruth's story before you move on to the next week.

I: INTO THE PROMISE

Every story in Scripture has a promise for our lives, and Ruth's story is filled with promises of hope. During this portion we'll see how we can step into the promises God has for us.

T: TURN SOMETHING AROUND After filling up with truth throughout the week, here is where we'll decide what actions we need to take and what changes in our attitudes we need to create.

Are you ready to begin? Me too! Let's do this.



WEEK ONE

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.¹

DALE CARNEGIE

WHAT TO READ THIS WEEK: RUTH 1:1-18

VIDEO GUIDE | WEEK ONE

WARM THINGS UP

Ask everyone in your group to answer these questions. This will help you guys start to build the much needed community for this study!

What made you decide to be part of this study?

What are some hopes/expectations you have for this study?

Where do you like to do your Bible study?

If money and time were no object, what is one thing you would want to accomplish?

What is something that tends to distract and detour you away from doing Bible study?

WATCH

To hear more from Nicki, download the optional video bundle to view Week One at *www.lifeway.com/5HabitsStudy*.

CREATE CONVERSATION

What is one thing you have started and quit?

How would you describe the difference between quitting and finishing?

What is something or a season you "finished"?

How much accountability do you like to have in your life?

Have someone read ¹ Peter ⁵:⁸. How has the Enemy blinded our culture to quit the "things of God" without even realizing it?

End your time together by praying and having everyone finish this sentence:

I want to be a woman who completes my God assignments because ...



DAY ONE

ONCE A QUITTER, ALWAYS A QUITTER?

QUIT QUITTING VERSE

And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. ROMANS 5:3-4

Hi, I'm Nicki. And I was four the first time I quit.

My mom had signed me up for some soccer team my brother was on. It was one of those two-for-one deals, where she could have both kids at the same place and same time with a sibling discounted rate.

The problem was I had zero interest in soccer. Z-e-r-o. I wanted to be a cheerleader, the kind that flew through the air and did toe-touches like a pro. I didn't think the soccer shoes were cute. Running down the field was too much effort. And the boys on the team were just gross, always picking up worms and saying rude boy things.

So, I discovered a little manipulative move. It was called the stomachache.

You don't mess with girls when their stomachs ache, even if they are four years old. So, eventually my mom and the coach got tired of my soccer stomach woes and didn't make me finish out the season. They let me quit.

Wouldn't you know, one afternoon the coach knocked on our back door. My mom and I were so surprised to see him and wondered why he was stopping by.

It was to give me my trophy!

Me, the girl who quit, still got the shiny trophy.

Score.

I thought I discovered a secret that day: if you quit you still win. But you and I both know this is the furthest thing from the truth.

So began a lifetime of quitting for me. Some of the decisions I've made to quit have had little effect on my life. Other decisions to quit have left me feeling empty, broken, and hopeless.

I got tired of being this woman who sulked in defeat. I wanted to be a woman God would look at and say, "Yes, that's someone I can count on." For the past few years, I've wrestled with this question—why do I give up so easily?

That question led me to ask myself more questions: Does it have something to do with my genetics? Is something wrong with me? Am I just lazy?

- What are a few reasons why people quit?
- Have you recently given up on something? Explain.

I haven't found a perfect prescription to this quitting problem, but I have found a way to persevere through the hard places, and I learned how to get behind someone who didn't give up. Her story is tucked away in the Bible—Ruth.

- What do you know about the story of Ruth?
- How much of the Old Testament have you studied?

I'll be honest, I'm not an Old Testament Bible scholar. In fact, I'm a woman who's just like most of you. I have a job, kids, carpools to drive, and a pug to chase down the street from the angry UPS man. (He's so over our dog.)

As we study this book of the Bible together, I can promise you may still have some questions left in your heart. There's so much we don't know about this story.

What we do know is this woman, Ruth, went from loyalty to royalty. God chose to bring the most powerful generational line in history through her—because she chose not to quit a commitment she made.

Through her journey I discovered five habits she consistently lived out. We'll unpack the first habit next week, but this week we need to build the foundation of Ruth's story.

There's a battle inside every woman that makes her want to give up on something or someone. With God's help, we can and will complete the commitments we have made. We, too, will become women who don't quit.

Let's take a closer look at today's Quit Quitting Verse: Romans 5:3-4.

And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. ROMANS 5:3-4

The first word I want us to focus on from these verses is: affliction.

• Circle all the words you would use to describe what affliction is:

grief	fear	sickness	hurt
pain	distress	suffering	tears
discouragement	peace	hope	sustain

According to *dictionary.com* the official definition of *affliction* is:

noun: a state of pain, distress, or grief; misery.²

- What is an area of your life where you have experienced affliction?
- How can going through an affliction make you want to quit something?
- What three things does Romans 5:3-4 tell us come after affliction?
- 1.
- 2.
- З.

Ruth's story is filled with affliction: loss, death, hunger, and uncertainty.

Through this story of affliction we will also see a story of endurance, proven character, and hope lived out in a powerful way.

These steps I keep taking each day toward becoming a woman God can count on have taught me character is the foundation for the assignments God has for each of our lives.

Sometimes I think we get so caught up in the pursuit of "purpose." What if our larger purpose is made up of small assignments and commitments that continually build our character?

I've yet to meet a woman who has a perfect character and can zoom through all of life's assignments with ease and comfort. Every woman I have ever met is someone who has experienced some type of affliction in her life. We are all in this process together.

While we may live in a day and age when kids get trophies for everything no matter what, there's more at stake than trophies in God's eyes. Eternity is at stake. Every decision we make to quit or to stick it out has eternal consequences.

So, the choice is ours.

Will we allow the afflictions of life to transform us or cause us to turn from God?

DAY TWO

THEY GOT SUPER HUNGRY

QUIT QUITTING VERSE

... for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ROMANS 8:13

When was the last time you were hungry?

Like, really hungry? Could-kill-someone-hungry?

In the South, where I live, people don't mess around with their meals. We actually have a term for the emotions that hunger can bring: "Hangry."

It's when you are soooooo hungry you actually become angry. Being hangry is definitely a set-up for failure, quitting, and giving up. Not even having the right amount of food can make a person become angry like nothing else!

Right off the bat in Ruth's story we are dealing with a major hunger issue:

During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. RUTH 1:1A

Famine. When food is scarce, people get all kinds of crazy. I think it's safe to assume there were some "hangry" people around.

We see the issue of famine pop up in other places in the Bible too, specifically during this "time of the judges."

• Read Judges 21:25. What does it say everyone was doing during this time?

• Why does it say they were doing this?

When I read the first part of this verse that said, "The period of the Judges," it sounded very official, organized, and like things should have been in order. Typically, when we think about the word *judge* in our modern society, we think about laws being upheld.

But this period was the exact opposite. Having no king brought a lot of disorder.

Imagine what it was like living in a world where everyone did what they thought was right in their own eyes.

Hot. Mess.

• Can you think of a period in your life when you did "whatever you wanted, whenever you wanted"? What happened to you?

Chaos. Disobedience. Regret. Those are the words I think of when I just start doing things my own way. The reality is, we will always have the choice to do things our way or to follow God.

I had to get to a place where I accepted the reality that each day I make decisions that lead me to follow my own ways.

A few examples:

- Listening to a sermon and thinking it's for someone else. My pride convinces me I don't need to listen to that Word, but God has something for me and I miss it.
- Coming to God with a personal agenda with my prayers. You know, those prayers we pray like, "God, here's where I'm struggling and here's what I want to see happen."

• Not listening to advice or wisdom from someone else because I think, *I have this figured out.*

When I make these decisions, I'm *feeding my flesh*. I'm not crazy about that word "flesh;" it just sounds gross. It honestly makes me think of Shark Week! Even though I don't use this word very often, the Bible uses *flesh* quite a bit so it's good for us to understand it a little more.

I dug around a little to see what *flesh* means in the original Greek language the New Testament was written in. As we study the Bible, sometimes we have to look way back at the origin of a word to understand how the writer really used it before we can understand how it applies to us today.

The Greek word for *flesh* is *sarks*.

Sarks is defined as done apart from faith, decisions (actions) that originate from self or are empowered by self.³

I have definitely made some decisions and taken some actions that had nothing to do with God's plans for me.

Our Quit Quitting Verse today is perfect for helping us understand what it's like to make decisions and take action without letting God's Spirit lead.

• Fill in the blanks for today's Quit Quitting Verse:

... for if you live according to the _____, you are going to _____. But if by the _____ you put to _____ the deeds of the body, you will _____. ROMANS 8:13

Describe how you have lived according to your own ways.

Romans 8:13 offers us a solution for this self-focused mindset. It says we can live by the Spirit of God.

• How do we live by the Spirit of God?

While this might sound as complicated as my youngest daughter's elementary school carpool line, I think living by the Spirit can be summed up in two words:

Know God.

Know His character, know His promises, know His truth, and know the Word He has left for us to study.

Already in these first two days together, we have gotten to know God more. But let's keep going.

Ruth's story begins with a woman named Naomi and a man named Elimelech. They lived in a city called Bethlehem—the same Bethlehem in which Jesus would later be born.

• Naomi gave birth to two boys. What were the boys' names? [Read Ruth 1:2.]

_____ and _____

Elimelech was a man who loved God, Jehovah, the one true living God. In fact, *Elimelech* means, "My God is King."

• Do you know what your name means? Take a minute and look it up on the Internet. Write down what you discover:

Things got extremely hard for Naomi and Elimelech in the city of Bethlehem. Food and work became scarce, which is so ironic because *Bethlehem* means "House of Bread."⁴

My husband and I have stayed rooted in the same area of North Carolina since we got married, but we have moved twelve times in fifteen years. Moving is my least favorite activity.

I hate the packing, the unpacking, the sorting through this, and tossing out that (and the struggle months later, *Why did I toss that out?!*).

Elimelech made the decision he was going to pack up his family and move to a place called Moab. He had heard there was food and work there.

A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to live in the land of Moab for a while. RUTH 1:1B



Some people believe that perhaps Elimelech was chasing a promise of prosperity in Moab.⁵ Regardless of the reasons Elimelech picked up his family to move, one of the first things we can see from this story is that famine prompts movement.

When things are not working out in our favor, something has to change.

Typically, when we think about the word *famine*, it has a negative feeling, but what if we allowed those places in our lives that make us want to quit to get a little hungry, a little dry, a little ... deathly?

I know I need movement in my life. Because for too long now the only thing that has moved me is the cycle of defeat.



The cycle of defeat keeps me in a place of continually being a woman who quits. I start something, it gets difficult, I start to feel hopeless, and so I quit. The cycle starts over just about every Monday for me.

To break this cycle, I need to starve those thoughts that say:

You can't do this. It's too hard. There's no way. Your commitments don't matter that much. • What are some thoughts you need to quit feeding today?

I also need to starve the actions that keep me in this cycle. Some of these for me include:

Failing to plan each day. Not spending time in God's Word. Isolating myself from others.

• What are some actions that would be on your cycle of defeat?

I've been feeding those thoughts that keep me in this place of wanting to quit, give up, and walk away. Romans 8:13 tells us we can be women who live by the Spirit of God, not by our own flesh.

Living by the Spirit isn't a stop-and-start cycle. It's a continuous movement. One which goes higher, lower, to the left, and to the right. It feels bumpy and awkward most days. And honestly, my thoughts and actions don't always reflect that of a woman who lives by the Spirit.

If we continue to live by whatever we feel like, we could entirely miss what God has for us. We have to get hungry for the right things.

- Read Galatians 5:22-23. What are the nine things living by the Spirit can give us a desire for more of in our lives:
- 1.

 2.

 3.

 4.

 5.

 6.

 7.

 8.

 9.
- Which of these do you need more of today? Why?

Learning to live by the Spirit doesn't mean the direction we are always supposed to take will be clear. But, when we stop feeding the places of disobedience and defeat in our lives, our steps will be firmer and firmer.

We're going to see that perhaps leaving the "House of Bread" wasn't the best decision for Elimelech to make. His actions weren't going to lead to the results he ultimately hoped for. Who hasn't made a decision they have later regretted? (Cue emoji girl with hand raised.)

• When have you been desperate and made a decision (by the flesh) you later regretted?

When I think about Elimelech picking up his family to head to Moab, he created a movement in their lives. But was it a movement led by the Spirit of God? We know he loved God, but did he trust God? Did he move too quickly?

It was a desperate time for them for sure. We can't say for sure if Elimelech was living by the flesh or by the Spirit. I don't know if Elimelech prayed and asked God for direction over this move. I don't know if he sought counsel from the wisest people in his community. And I don't know what Naomi thought about this move.

I've discovered the only way to recover from a bad decision is to make the next good decision. Let's starve the things that are keeping us in the cycle of defeat and let ourselves get hungry for the things which last.

DAY THREE

TEMPORARY TEMPTATIONS

QUIT QUITTING VERSE

Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 1 PETER 5:8

My husband and I are first generation farmers.

Maybe that sounds interesting and exciting, but what it really means is we have absolutely no idea what we are doing. And our farm is a fixer upper, so that also adds a whole other level of unknown territory most days.

We spend a lot of time on YouTube and on Google, searching for answers from people who actually know what they are doing.

Since I'm a woman who tends to run and give up, I'm often tempted out here on this farm to want to put this place up for sale and move. Like the day our septic system overflowed in our front yard. Or the time I had to go stand outside for an hour with a hair dryer to unfreeze the pipes in the well. And when I had to figure out how to become a pig midwife? Oh my mercy ...

Yes, there are many days I drive by neighborhoods and remember what my "normal" life was and my exaggerated quitting thoughts win. But, really this idea to move, flee, and get out of here is just my temporary solution to the many problems we've encountered out here. We know God led us to this property, and we know this is going to be a lifetime process of learning the farm life.

When I see my girls and their friends riding the go-cart around our property or look at the barnyard filled with baby pigs, I stop and smile. I'm grateful my temporary solution (let's move!) didn't become my permanent answer to a problem.

- What is an area in your life where you often see nothing but problems?
- What are some of the temporary solutions you often toss around in your mind?

This move Elimelech decided to make was supposed to be a temporary solution, too.

Whenever we study a text, it is good to compare it with different versions of the Bible. Read this version of the text in the King James Version:

And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. RUTH 1:1B [KJV]

The word sojourn means temporary stay.

See, Elimelech never had intentions of Moab becoming a long-term or permanent home for him, Naomi, and their boys. It was to be a temporary solution to a problem they had, but Elimelech could have never known, guessed, or been able to imagine the permanent effects this decision would bring.

Moab was not a place filled with people who loved God. They worshiped a false god named Chemosh.

In tomorrow's study, we'll learn more about these people who lived in Moab called the Moabites, but you need to know, this wasn't the safest, most promising place for a man who loved God to bring his family.

Sometimes along our journeys I think each of us are tempted to "make stops" in which we never intend to become permanent in our lives. Yet somehow they do.

- We miss one week of church that turns into two, three, four, and five.
- We drink one soda (which we gave up months ago), and before we know it we are restocking the fridge with every flavor of bubbly goodness.
- One night on the couch away from our spouse turns into a week, then a move into the spare bedroom, and then a move out of the house completely.
 - Describe something that was supposed to be temporary but became permanent in your life.
 - On the timeline below, write some "temporary stops" you made for problems that turned into something permanent. Try to come up with at least three.



For me, when I was nineteen years old, I made a temporary stop on my purity.

And, one cold January morning I found myself standing in a bathroom holding a pregnancy test that read "positive." My life was permanently changed.

I've made countless other "temporary stops" that led to life change. Yes, our God is a God who redeems, which we will see later in this story, but this idea of not allowing temporary temptations to lead us astray is why today's Quit Quitting Verse is so important to me.

> Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 1 PETER 5:8

There is an Enemy of our souls who is always looking to detour and distract us away from the permanent plans God has for our lives. He will do whatever he has to do to convince us these "little" stops don't matter, but if we can become aware and alert, then we will have the ability to reject his predictable tactics in the name of Jesus.

• What is an area you can see the Enemy trying to create a "permanent stop" in your life?

Here's the thing—while we learned yesterday that following the Spirit of God can feel a little unpredictable, the plans of the Enemy are *very* predictable.

His plans always include: Condemning us. Distracting us. Convincing us to go against God's Word. Discouraging us.

- What are the two points of action 1 Peter 5:8 gives us when it comes to these predictable plans?
- 1.
- 2.

To be serious and to be alert doesn't mean we are walking around this world with fear, paranoia, or with a spirit of doom and gloom. Yes, we have an Enemy who has a plan, but we have a God who is with us and for us!

While I believe God wants us to be aware and alert of the Enemy, I don't believe God wants us rejecting the Devil more than we rejoice with Him.

One of the definitions of *devour* is to consume.⁶

So of course the Enemy would love for us to be more focused on him than on God. I think this is how many "temporary stops" are made. We become consumed with fear, uncertainty, and jealousy, and it destroys us.

- How has the Enemy tried to consume your life?
- Read Deuteronomy 11:13 and write out the two commands God gives in this verse:
- 1.
- 2.

These commands offer the Devil nothing and bring us everything we need to push through.

• Now read Deuteronomy 11:14-15. What is the promise God gives us in these verses if we do those two things?

Elimelech was consumed with finding food, security, and hope for his family. Tomorrow, we will see how this brought him everything but what he left home in search for. It was a temporary stop, which led to a very permanent place.

I am so thankful for the Bible and the way it can show us prophetic things in our lives. The deep, historical roots of this story have so much to teach us today. Whatever the effects of these temporary stops in our lives, they don't mean it's too late, it's over, or we're finished.

This story will show us that God is a God who restores, rebuilds, and renews—all things.

DAY FOUR

2 WEDDINGS & 3 FUNERALS

QUIT QUITTING VERSE

The LORD is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit. PSALM 34:18

OK, so we are three verses into Ruth's story and things are about to get a little out of control.

Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons. RUTH 1:3

Well, what on earth just happened? Where we left off yesterday, Elimelech and Naomi were in Moab and getting settled. And then, boom. Just like that, the unknown author of Ruth leaves us completely stumped.

But, here's something that might comfort our wondering woes:

Whenever we study the Bible, it's important to know there's a story time and story setting time. This story isn't being told to people who are living in the time of the Judges. It's not a real-life Twitter feed of what's happening. This story was told many, many years later to a different audience in a way that mattered to them.

It would be similar to us re-telling a story from our childhood to our kids. Our kids might not understand or care about some of the details of the story. So we leave things out. This is why as we study the Bible we may still have many questions in our minds about details it seems the author left out.

Like what exactly happened to Elimelech?!

I need to know these details. It's kinda like when my girls come home from school. I'm so anxious to hear about their day, and all I get back is: It was fine, good, or OK.

How did Elimelech's death come about? That detail was apparently not something the author felt like he needed to share.

Have you ever wondered what people will say about you when you die? It was a beautiful spring day. Our Carolina blue skies were near perfection. The temperature was just right and a cool breeze brushed beside me as I walked into the church. The weather just didn't seem fitting for such a sad day. Moments that mattered were shared, tears of sorrow were cried, and a life well lived was honored.

As I left the church I wondered, What will people say about me when I die?

I pulled out my phone and saw a new and important email had come through. I quickly clicked it open and read it. There was a big project I had been working on, and I was waiting to hear if I was selected. This email confirmed—I wasn't chosen. The first thought that popped in my head was, *Well, you should have quit this a long time ago anyway.*

My thoughts continued to spiral downward as I left the church. I was convinced the only words people would ever speak at my funeral were ones of defeat:

Nicki, the woman who never finished anything.

Nicki, the woman who quit.

Nicki, the woman whose dream died with her.

It was as though my cycle of defeat had moved me to a new level—despair and death. I felt like one of my dreams died that day. When a woman feels despair and death, she feels as though hope is as far away as it possibly can be.

I wondered if Naomi felt this way the day she stood over her husband's grave. This painful moment filled with despair, reflecting on the life of a man she intimately knew.

What his clothes smelled like.

His favorite meal.

The things that made him laugh.

Prayers he prayed.

I imagine as she was looking into the future, it didn't seem like there was much to keep fighting for.

• When was the last time you were filled with despair?

The good thing is Naomi still has these two boys: Mahlon and Chilion.

• Looking back on the time you were filled with despair, what were the things you saw you still had?

Sometimes when we are walking through places of despair, it's hard to see what we still have. It seems like so much is gone and we just can't seem to find hope ahead. This is why I love how God gave us our Quit Quitting Verse today: Psalm 34:18.

• What does it mean to you for God to be close when you feel brokenhearted?

I feel like whoever wrote the Book of Ruth was a to-the-point person because we are only about to enter the fourth verse of this story and see another life-altering event.

• Read Ruth 1:4, what does it say happened next for Mahlon and Chilion?

See, at the beginning of the story, we saw that Elimelech was a man who loved God. He and Naomi were Israelites, meaning they worshiped the one true living God, Jehovah. We can probably assume Mahlon and Chilion were brought up in the same faith.

- What type of women does the text say Mahlon and Chilion married?
- So, we have _____ites married to _____ites.

The history between the Moabites and the Israelites goes much further back than just in our study of Ruth. This isn't the first or the last time we see an encounter between the two. The Moabites worshiped a god called, Chemosh. Chemosh was an evil god that led the Moabites to do all kinds of evil things.

- Read 2 Kings 3:26-27. What does it say the king of Moab sacrificed?
- What kinds of issues do you think could rise up in a marriage with two very different faiths merging together?

And then, suddenly, things go from bad to complicated to really bad.

After they lived in Moab about 10 years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two children and without her husband. RUTH 1:4B-5

In five verses, two weddings and three funerals.

Wow.

This book is intense and we are just getting started. Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah needed God to be near. For those of us wading through these days where we just don't know what to do, knowing that God is near is comforting.

We don't have to quit. We don't have to give up when He is near.

DAY FIVE

DESPERATE DEPARTURES

QUIT QUITTING VERSE

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. HEBREWS 10:23 [NLT]

Not too long ago I was at the airport waiting for my flight to begin boarding. I happened to be seated right next to the ticket counter, which is a great place to do some people watching (a.k.a. my favorite activity).

I cracked open a bottle of Coke Zero® and settled in for the finest thirty minutes of people watching there ever was. Flights were being delayed and canceled like crazy because of a tropical storm, and since there were only a few flights that were still heading out, it was bringing all kinds of crazy out.

A frazzled mom with a toddler and frustrated husband walked toward the ticket counter. She frantically explained the exhaustion of what it's like to travel with a toddler and experience canceled flights. This flight was their last opportunity to get home, and she was willing to do anything at this point. She begged, pleaded, and even shed a tear.

Then, a gentleman, maybe around forty, stood behind her and began shouting his reasons for needing to get on that last flight out. His wife was going to be so upset if he missed her birthday, and he'd been traveling for a week. He desperately pleaded his case and told the airline agent she would be saving his marriage if he got on that plane.

Wow. Such high esteems for the airline agents.

But then, this little elderly woman came walking up, pushed her way past all the passengers pleading their cases, and banged her hand on the counter. She said, "You listen to me, young lady, I am getting on that plane whether or not you give me a ticket. I want to go home!"

With wide eyes, the airline agent told the woman she would need to calm down and step to the side or she would have to call security. So the woman stepped to the side but continued to shout her demands.

I don't know how exactly an airline determines who gets to squeeze on the last flights out, but I'll tell you something—either that woman won the plane ticket lottery or that agent just didn't want to deal with her anymore.

She was handed the golden ticket and made her way onto the flight.

We all react differently to desperate situations. And what we are about to see is Noami, Ruth, and Orpah were no different.

[Naomi] and her daughters-in-law prepared to leave the land of Moab, because she had heard in Moab that the LORD had paid attention to His people's need by providing them food. She left the place where she had been living, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, and traveled along the road leading back to the land of Judah. RUTH 1:6-7

OK, wait. Let's go back for a second

• Remember when we were trying to figure out the logic behind Elimelech's decision to move to Moab? What does verse 6 say Naomi heard?

There's certainly a hint that maybe they moved to Moab because they just didn't think God was going to come through. Now, it's too late, and Naomi hears of the faithfulness of God. She thinks of the only thing a desperate widowed woman can do—flee to what's familiar.

She begins her desperate departure from Moab to Bethlehem with these two young ladies.

• Read Ruth 1:8-9. After they have already begun their journey, what does Naomi say to the girls?

- Why do you think Naomi initially made this decision to send the girls back Moab? Check the answer that best fits your viewpoint, or write your own.
 - The sight of these two girls reminded her too much of the pain she had from losing her husband and her sons.
 - □ She was too afraid of being responsible for them.
 - □ Naomi wanted to be alone in her grief.
 - □ Other:

A few verses down we start to see Naomi process her decision with the girls. She says things like she's old, she can't have more sons, and even if she did, the girls would be too old for them.

But then, in verse 13, we see the real reason surface:

No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share, because the LORD's hand has turned against me. **RUTH 1:13B**

She's mad at God. Really mad. She's shaking her fist just like that little elderly woman at the airline counter.

• Describe a time when you have been angry with God.

Naomi's anger, hurt, and disappointment is making her want to quit these two girls. Orpah is the first to make her decision.

> Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, RUTH 1:14A

She goes. Back to her family, back to Moab, back to her god, and we never hear about Orpah again. But Ruth ...

... but Ruth clung to her. RUTH 1:14B

When I read this part of the story, I immediately thought of our Quit Quitting Verse.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. HEBREWS 10:23 [NLT]

Hold tight.

That's what I see Ruth doing in this moment. I don't know the thought process behind Orpah's decision to flee to what was familiar, but there's something deeper happening in Ruth that I think even the author of this book realized when he wrote the word *clung*.

I believe Ruth is clinging to the one thing she knows she has left that represents the God she now loves.

Maybe this marriage for Ruth was more than a love story between a man and woman. Perhaps it brought a soul change.

• Who is someone who has helped you feel close to God?

Whatever the reason, Ruth is clinging.

As we wrap up this first week, it's time to do our Q.U.I.T. Strategy. Set aside just five minutes to work through this activity, which will help keep you on track toward becoming a woman who doesn't quit!

Q.U.I.T. STRATEGY

Q: QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK AND ANSWER

- Were you able to complete all five days of the study?
- □ yes
- □ no
- If no, what held you back?
- What is one question the author of Ruth has not answered for you?

U: UNDERSTANDING THE WORD

- List all the characters in this story we learned about this week:
- 1.
- 2.
- З.
- 4.
- 5.
- б.
- Where did Elimelech and Naomi move from and to?
 - Egypt to Moab
 - Bethlehem to Moab
 - □ Moab to Bethlehem

• List at least four life-altering events that we saw happen this week.

I: INTO THE PROMISE

• You studied five Quit Quitting Verses this week. Which of these verses did you need the most this week? Write it out below and share how this can help you step into God's promises for your life.

T: TURN SOMETHING AROUND

- Which of these areas did you feel challenged by God this week?
 - Moving too quickly when I don't see God working
 - Leaving because things get hard
- □ The need to cling tighter to God

2"Affliction," *dictionary.com* (online) [cited 28 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: *dictionary.reference.com*. 3"Greek Lexicon :: G4561 (KJV)." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 28 Jan, 2016. *https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/*

5."Life Lessons: Do Your Surroundings Show Faith?, "*Trending Christian News* (online), 9 August 2014 [cited 28 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: http://trendingchristian.com/

^{1.} Dale Carnegie, as quoted by Ben Arment, Dream Year (New York, NY: Penguin, 2014), 112.

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^{6&}quot;Devour," Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged (online) [cited 28 January 2016]. Available from the Internet: http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO NOT GIVE UP?

Every woman eventually faces the decision whether or not to give up, but there's something special that happens when a woman decides to persevere in the face of problems or pain. A woman who refuses to quit influences her world in ways she could have never dreamed or imagined.

Perseverance is one of the greatest skills but also the hardest lessons we will learn in our lifetime. We are living in a day where we are encouraged to do life based on how we feel, but the problem is that most days we don't feel like doing anything challenging.

In this 6-session Bible study, join Nicki Koziarz as you learn to follow through on your commitments despite your feelings and embrace the grace of refinement rather than the relief of release. Through the story of Ruth, learn 5 habits to help you become the woman who doesn't quit.

HABIT ONE: She accepts the assignment of refinement.HABIT TWO: She follows through despite how she feels.HABIT THREE: She stays open to the movement of God.HABIT FOUR: She gives to others what she needs.HABIT FIVE: She moves forward in faith.

Bible Study / Women



